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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

INFORMATION REPORT

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COUNTRY USSR

SUBJECT Harbor Observations - Poti

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1. Ship's Itinerary

Port	Dates	Cargo
Venice	14 Aug 53	--
Istanbul	19 Aug 53	--
Poti	20-22 Aug 53	Cargo in - ballast Cargo out - manganese ore
Istanbul	26 Aug 53	--
Antwerp	8-24 Sept 53	--

2. Security Measures and Pilotage

On approaching Poti, the informant's ship anchored at a position approximately 1/2 mile northeast of the outer extremity of the breakwater. A pilot boat came alongside and a Soviet pilot, accompanied by a Soviet guard, boarded the ship. Informant observed other guards on the pilot boat. The ship entered the harbor and docked on the south side of the North Pole. A searching party of approximately 20 persons came on board and conducted the security examination. Informant stated that members of this party were in uniform and he referred to them as police. The uniform included a green band on the cap with red stars at various places on the uniform.

3. The crew was mustered together in one part of the ship and the Master was required to furnish three or four men to accompany the searchers. The informant failed to note whether the guards carried side arms. However, he stated guards armed with side arms were stationed on the dock at

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positions opposite the fore, aft and midship sections of the ship. These guards were on duty day and night until the ship's departure. The examination was rigorous, and all equipment was sealed, including binoculars, cameras, and radio transmitter.

4. The ostensible reason for the search was to look for stowaways; also anything of a contraband nature. They particularly searched for women's underclothing, which was not permitted to be brought into the port. The officials of the searching party were very polite during the search. Members of the crew were furnished passes and no restrictions were set on liberty. There were no restricted areas in the harbor area or the town and members of the crew could stroll around as they pleased. However, everyone was required to have passes, including those workers who boarded the ship. These special passes issued to the workers permitted them to work on that particular ship for that particular day.
5. After loading of the ship was completed it proceeded out of the harbor to a position outside the breakwater, where it anchored for two hours while a searching party again searched the ship. The pilot then left the ship and returned to Poti with the searching party.

6. Ships Observed

Informant observed another Italian ship tied up on the south side of the North Pole at a position due east of the informant's ship. This ship, the S/S Stella Azzurra (It) was waiting to load manganese ore for Antwerp. On the other side of the harbor, at a position due south of the S/S Stella Azzurra, informant observed a Soviet merchant ship which he was unable to identify. However, he did state that it appeared to be an old one, probably a former German ship, with one stack and no radar. There were several other merchant ships tied up near the Soviet ship (identity not known) of approximately 4000 tons each. At the extreme east end of the harbor, informant observed a floating dry dock with a small destroyer, apparently undergoing repairs. In the same area as the dry dock there were about four or five old type Soviet destroyers, which appeared to be of a D E type.

7. Informant stated that there was a concrete quay which extended north from the North Pole. He observed two old type destroyers of approximately 1000 tons each tied up to it, at least one having radar. He was unable to state how they were armed. There were also five or six other small destroyers in the same area.
8. Informant stated he observed one submarine (identity not known) being repaired at the extreme southeast corner of the harbor. While anchored outside the breakwater, he saw several small subs leaving the harbor and later returning.

9. General Conditions

Informant stated that this was his first trip to Poti. There appeared to be sufficient labor on hand in the port. The workmen looked well and were fairly well clothed in cotton clothing. Informant stated that conditions ashore regarding food, clothing, and living conditions were average. "Not so good and not so bad."

10. The manganese ore was loaded by electric cranes having a capacity of about five tons. Although the cranes were approximately 20 years old, they were in fairly good condition, breaking down just once. The ship loaded approximately 1000 tons of manganese, the stevedores working "round the clock." Informant advised that there were approximately 100,000 tons of manganese ore on hand ready to be loaded. Informant observed nothing important in the way of industrial activity in the area. He was unable to state whether fuel oil was available in the port. The only export traffic he noticed consisted of grain and ore.

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11. The only construction activity he noted was in the area of the concrete quay extending north from the North Pole, previously mentioned in this report. It appeared that either the quay (not shown on ref (b)) is being extended or repaired. The only unusual incident noted by the informant was during the security examination on ship, a member of the searching party saw a picture of Beria on the cover of a Time Magazine in the ship's cabin and tore it to shreds.
12. When the Master of the ship went ashore, a Soviet woman, about 34 years of age, was designated to accompany him and assist him in getting about. He was informed that this woman worked for INFLOT the Soviet Government office maintained to protect the ship, and also to act as the ship's agent. She was fairly attractive and was dressed in civilian clothes. The informant facetiously stated that her orders were to "remain with him day and night" while the ship was in port. He invited her to lunch twice, and during the course of conversation told her what he and those outside the Iron Curtain thought of the Soviet Union. She apparently did not attempt to justify or propagandize the Soviet system, but stated that everyone in the Soviet Union was "working for the next generation." This woman apparently did not attempt to interrogate the informant about conditions in other parts of the world. However, she did inquire as to whether "American soldiers were slaves."
13. Informant stated that in general the port facilities were in a "status quo condition" and no major repair or maintenance activities were in progress.

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